

SENIOR & SHOPMAKER GALLERY

Press Release

Afterimage: The Prints of Bruce Conner

September 20 – November 17, 2012

Senior & Shopmaker Gallery, in collaboration with the Conner Family Trust, is pleased to present *Afterimage: The Prints of Bruce Conner*, the first exhibition of the artist's work at the gallery. Conner, who passed away in 2008, was born in McPherson, Kansas in 1933 and moved to San Francisco in the late 1950s where he became a pivotal figure in the Beat scene of poets, writers, artists and performers. Active in all media, including painting, collage and assemblage, sculpture, graphic arts, filmmaking, and photography, Conner brought a radical and iconoclastic approach to art-making, questioning and rejecting ideals of artistic purity, style, and identity, as well as the market-driven dynamic of the art world.

The show, accompanied by an on-line catalogue with an essay by Peter Boswell, will include lithographs Conner produced in 1970-71 to preserve the imagery of his ephemeral felt-tip drawings of the period, as well as later prints based on ink blot drawings and collages.

Linking the artist's extensive graphic oeuvre to his work in other media is a command of light and shadow that permeates images hovering between fugitive and eternal, fantasy and reality. The retinal effect of his starkly monochromatic drawings of the 1960s and 1970s is achieved through the use of densely woven lines, creating highly complex shifting patterns. Formally rigorous, these maze-like drawings negate external references and dissolve figure/ground boundaries. Often structured by circular mandala forms, they attest to the artist's deep knowledge of occult and Eastern philosophies. Conner's immersive felt-tip drawing process took on a performative aspect as the artist spent continuous hours making them, never lifting pen from paper in order to produce a graphically uninterrupted line.

In 1970, concerned about the fugitive nature of his felt tip drawings, Conner initiated the meticulous reproduction of the images at Kaiser Graphics, a commercial printer in Oakland, California. Believing hand-drawn and inked lithography interfered with the precision of his imagery, the artist chose a commercial offset process, flouting print world conventions by using photomechanical rather than fine art printing. The process, however, allowed him to amend flaws in the original drawings and create improved compositions. This led to the production of some one hundred prints, from small, single sheets to suites of up to twenty-five related panels (titled *SET OF THREE*, *SET OF FOUR*, etc.). The sequential relationship between one drawing and another - the unfolding of form to form - is preserved to great effect in the thematic organization of the print portfolios.

In the mid-1970s and continuing sporadically for the rest of his career, Conner produced inkblot drawings of startling variety and innovation: grids of small, calligraphic shapes executed by blotting small puddles of ink between the folds of accordion-pleated sheets of paper. Totemic and enigmatic, these rows of symmetrically arranged patterns read as documents scripted in a mysterious language.

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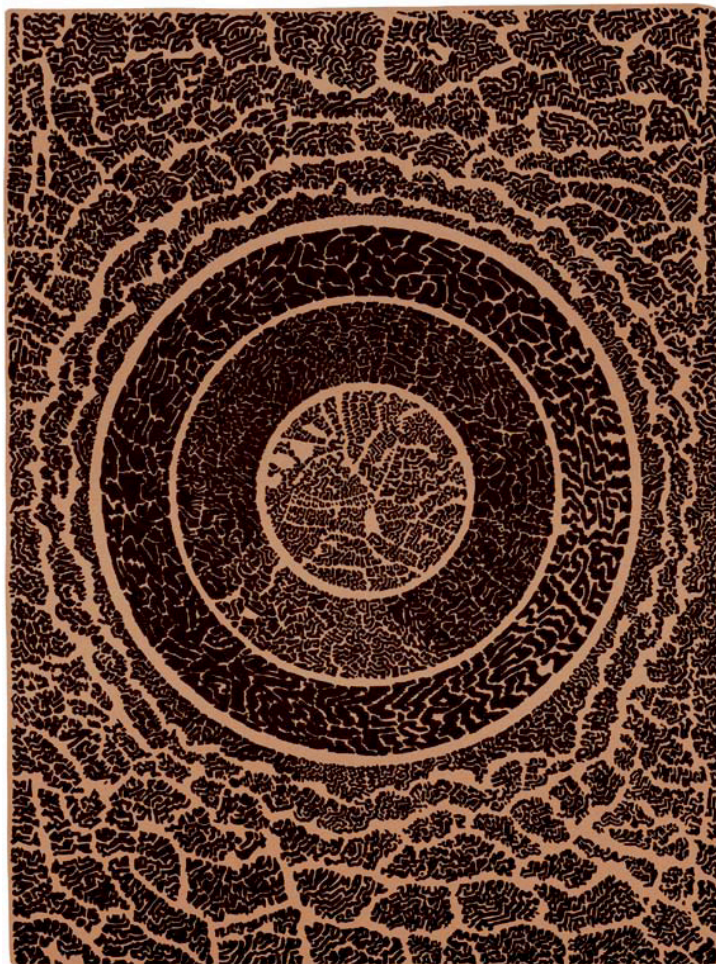
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Drawings and prints of later years are credited to “Anonymous” and “Anonymouse”, two of several alter egos invented by Conner to manipulate the idea of artistic identity and authorship. Images inspired by nature, *Leaf September 11-December 7, 2001*, and *Dark Leaf*, relate to elegiac drawings the artist made in response to the 9/11 attacks. Other prints relate to film projects or collage pieces, such as *BOMBHEAD*, originally conceived as a collage and later transferred and produced as an inkjet print. An outlier in the exhibition, the imagery harkens to Conner’s groundbreaking films of the 1970s such as *Crossroads*, 1976.

Conner’s work has been included in many major group exhibitions, notably the 1961 pioneering show *The Art of Assemblage* at The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Recent exhibitions include *Bruce Conner: The 1970s* at the Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria in 2010 and *Bruce Conner and the Primal Scene of Punk Rock*, MCA Denver, Denver, Colorado 2012. In 2000, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis organized a wide-ranging exhibition of Conner’s work entitled *2000 BC: The Bruce Conner Story, Part II*, which traveled to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco, and the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art. His work is included in the collections of many museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

For further information, please contact Betsy Senior or Laurence Shopmaker, at 212-213-6767 or at gallery@seniorandshopmaker.com



From *SET OF SEVEN (Image 707)*, 1970-71
Offset lithograph
22 ½ x 16 ½ inches (57.2 x 41.9 cm)
Edition of 50